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(54) Optical method and sensor for measuring displacements.

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(73) Proprietor: GEC-Marconi Limited
The Grove Warren Lane
Stanmore Middlesex HA7 4LY (GB)

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(72) Inventor: Ellis, Stafford Malcolm
Midways Willowhayne Estate Angmering Lane
East Preston West Sussex (GB)

(74) Representative: Pope, Michael Bertram Wingate
Central Patent Department Wembley Office The
General Electric Company, p.l.c. Hirst Research
Centre East Lane
Wembley Middlesex HA9 7PP (GB)

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Description

This invention relates to optical methods and sensors for measuring the displacement of an object.

In a known optical method of measuring the displacement of an object, a detector is arranged to measure light received by the detector from a light source, and the object is arranged such that displacement of the object in a direction transverse to the light path between the source and detector will cause a variation in the amount of light measured by the detector so that variation in the amount of light measured by the detector is indicative of the displacement of the object. Such a method is described, for example, in US-A-4,302,109, US-A-4,091,280 and US-A-3,983,391.

Such a method suffers the disadvantage that the amount of light measured by the detector will also vary according to the sensitivity of the detector, the light output of source, and other variations within the light path, these all being factors which may vary with time. Variations in the sensitivity of the detector, and changes in the output of the light source may be partially compensated for by the use of a reference beam. However it is difficult to compensate for variations in the light path.

To overcome this problem there has been proposed a method of measuring displacement of an object comprising: directing light within each of at least two discrete wavelength bands onto a detector along a path including a member having light transmissive or reflective properties which vary spatially in a different manner for light within each said wavelength band in at least one direction transverse to said path; utilising the output of said detector to provide an indication of the quantity of light transmitted within each of said wavelength bands along said path; and determining the change in the ratio of said indications resulting from displacement of the object.

Such a method is described in GB-A-2,025,608.

It is an object of the present invention to provide such a method of measuring displacement of a body suitable for use in measuring rotary displacement of an object together with a sensor for use in a method according to the invention.

According to the present invention there is provided an optical method of measuring displacement of an object comprising: directing light within each of at least two discrete wavelength bands onto a detector along a path including a member having light transmissive or reflective properties which vary spatially in a different manner for light within each said wavelength band in at least one direction transverse to said path; utilising the output of said detector to provide an indication of the quantity of light transmitted within each of said wavelength bands along said light path; and determining the change in the ratio of said indications resulting from displacement of the object, characterised in that said path further includes a second member

having light transmissive or reflective properties which vary spatially in the same manner for light in each said wavelength band in at least one direction transverse to said path, said two members being arranged so that displacement of the object causes said two members to be displaced relative to one another in a direction transverse to said path.

The invention also provides a sensor for use in an optical method of measuring displacement of an object according to the invention comprising: a light guide; a concave light reflective element positioned such that one end of said light guide is directed towards said reflective element from a position substantially at the centre of curvature of said reflective element; a light transmissive member interposed between said one end of said light guide and said reflective element, one of said member and said reflective element having transmissive or reflective properties as appropriate which for light within each of at least two different wavelength bands vary spatially in at least one direction transverse to the optical axis of said reflective element in a different manner for light in each said wavelength band, and the other of said member and said reflective element having light transmissive or reflective properties, as appropriate, which vary spatially in said one direction in the same manner for light in each said wavelength band, said member and said reflective element being supported so as to allow them to be displaced relative to each other in said one direction with displacement of said object.

In one particular sensor in accordance with the invention said member and reflective element are arranged for relative rotary displacement with displacement of said object.

A method and sensor having some features in common with a method and sensor according to the present invention, more particularly a sensor according to the present invention, are described in EP-A-0095273 which falls within the terms of Article 54 (3) EPC.

One method in accordance with the invention, together with a sensor for use in such a method will now be described, by way of example only, with reference to the accompanying drawings in which:

Figure 1 shows a longitudinal section through the sensor;

Figure 2 shows a section on the line X-X of Figure 1; and

Figure 3 is an enlarged view of one of the elements of the sensor.

Referring firstly to Figure 1, the sensor to be described is particularly adapted for measuring the angular displacement of a shaft 3 about its longitudinal axis. The sensor includes a light guide 5 in the form of a fibre-optic monofilament, one free end 7 of which lies at the centre of curvature of a plano-concave reflective element 9. Referring now also to Figures 2 and 3, the reflective surface of the element 9 has applied to it an alternating pattern of two different reflective coatings, the two coatings being indicated as 1 and 2

in Figure 3. The first coating 1, is designed to reflect more than 80% of light in the waveband 790 - 840 nm, and to reflect less than 1% of light in the waveband 880 - 930 nm. The second coating 2 is designed to reflect more than 80% of light in the waveband 880 - 930 nm, and to reflect less than 1% of light in the waveband 790 - 840 nm.

Referring again particularly to Figure 1, the reflective element 9 is supported by two parts 11, 13 of a housing, the plane back surface of the reflective element resting, via an 'O' ring 15, on a keep plate 17 attached by screws 21 to the part 13, the perimeter of the concave front surface of the reflective element being held by an appropriately sloping forward edge of the part 11. The part 11 is a screw fit within the part 13, and 'O' ring 23 being trapped between the two parts. The end 7 of the light guide 5 is located at the apex of a conical cavity within the part 11. The light guide extends from its end 7 in a ferrule 25 through an aperture through the part 11 and through a flange 27, the flange being secured by screws 33 onto the part 11 with an intermediate shim 29 and an 'O' ring 31.

An extension 3a of the shaft passes through an end plate 35 secured by screws 37 to the part 13, to extend into a cavity within the part 13, where it is contacted by the sealing lip of a "heart" seal 39. A further extension 3b, of the shaft enters into a further cavity with the part 13 where it is rotatably supported by bearings 41, 43 separated by inner 45 and outer 47 spacers. The shaft 3 then terminates in a nose portion 3c which passes through an aperture in the reflective element 9 into the conical cavity within the part 11. Attached to the nose portion 3c with a screw 49, such that it lies between the end 7 of the light guide 5, and the reflective element 9 is a metallic shutter 51 in the form of a Maltese Cross painted matt black as best shown in Figure 2.

In use the light guide 5 is connected to a unit (not shown) containing electronic, electro-optic and optical components. Light within the two wavebands 790 - 840 nm, and 880 - 930 nm is shone down the light guide 5 to be reflected by the reflective element 9 and pass back up the light guide 5, the shutter 51 obscuring a portion of the reflective element 9. The quantity of light within the two different wavebands returning down the light may then be measured. If, however, there is any angular movement of the shaft 3, the shutter 51 will rotate with respect to the reflective element 9, thus obscuring a different portion of the reflective element 9. Thus the amount of light within the two wavebands measured will change. An indication of the angular displacement of the shaft 3 may then be obtained by determining the change in the ratio of the quantities of light measured due to the displacement.

It will also be understood that if the optical transmission efficiencies for light within each of the two wavebands along the light path are calculated, and the change in the ratio of the efficiencies is determined, rather than the change in the ratio of the quantities of light measured, the

method will be insensitive to differences in output of the sources and detector responses, as well as variations within the optical path with time.

It will be appreciated that whilst in the sensor described herebefore by way of example the shutter 51 moves relative to the reflective element 9, the reverse situation may be used in a sensor according to the invention, i.e. angular displacement of the shaft 3 causing movement of the reflective element 9 relative to the shutter 51. Minor modifications to the form of the sensor would then be necessary.

It will also be appreciated that other forms of the shutter 51 are possible for example a glass disc having an opaque 'arm' photographically deposited on it.

It will also be appreciated that in an alternative form of the sensor described by way of example, the reflective element 9 may be replaced by a concave reflective element which reflects light in both wavelength bands in some areas only and elsewhere is non-reflective. The shutter 51 will then be replaced by a filter element some areas of which transmit light in one wavelength band only and other areas of which transmit light in the other wavelength band only.

It will be further understood that whilst in the method and sensors described above by way of example one light reflective element and one light transmissive member i.e. a shutter are used, in alternative methods in accordance with the invention two light transmissive members in the path of light directed onto a detector may be used, one showing light transmissive properties which vary spatially in a different manner for light in each wavelength band and the other having light transmissive properties which vary spatially in the same manner for light in the two wavelength bands.

Claims

1. An optical method of measuring rotational displacement of an object comprising: directing light within each of at least two discrete wavelength bands onto a detector along a path including a member (9) having light transmissive or reflective properties which vary spatially in a different manner for light within each said wavelength band in at least one direction transverse to said path; utilising the output of said detector to provide an indication of the quantity of light transmitted within each of said wavelength bands along said light path; and determining the change in the ratio of said indications resulting from displacement of the object (3); said path further including a second member (51) having light transmissive or reflective properties which vary spatially in the same manner for light in each said wavelength band in at least one direction transverse to said path, said two members (9 and 51) being arranged so that displacement of the object (3) causes said two members to be displaced relative to one another in a direction transverse to said path.

2. A sensor for use in an optical method of measuring rotational displacement of an object according to Claim 1 comprising: a light guide (5); a concave light reflective element (9) positioned such that one end (7) of said light guide (5) is directed towards said reflective element (9) from a position substantially at the centre of curvature of said reflective element (9); a light transmissive member (51) interposed between said one end of said light guide and said reflective element, one of said member and said reflective element having transmissive or reflective properties, as appropriate, which for light within each of at least two different wavelength bands vary spatially in at least one direction transverse to the optical axis of said reflective element (9) in a different manner for light in each said wavelength band, and the other of said member and said reflective element having light transmissive or reflective properties, as appropriate, which vary spatially in said one direction in the same manner for light in each said wavelength band, said member (51) and said reflective element (9) being supported so as to allow them to be displaced relative to each other in said one direction with displacement of said object (3).

3. A sensor according to Claim 2 in which said reflective element (9) is supported in a fixed position relative to said one end of said light guide, and said member is adapted for displacement with said object.

4. A sensor according to Claim 2 or Claim 3 wherein said member (51) and reflective element (9) are arranged for relative rotary displacement with displacement of said object (3).

5. A sensor according to Claim 4 wherein said member (51) is mounted for rotation on the end of a shaft (3) extending through a central aperture in the reflective element (9) from the side of said reflective element (9) remote from said light guide (5).

6. A sensor according to Claim 4 or 5 wherein said one of said member (51) and said reflective element (9) has two areas (1, 2) each of which transmits or reflects light only within a respective one of said two discrete wavelength bands and the other of said member (51) and said reflective element (9) transmits or reflects light only in an area having a shape substantially the same as one of said two areas (12) of said one of said member (51) and said reflective element (9).

7. A sensor according to any one of Claims 2 to 6 in which said one of said member (51) and said reflective element (9) is said reflective element (9), and said member (51) consists of an element which partially obstructs the light path between said one end (7) of said light guide (5) and said reflective element (9).

8. A sensor according to Claim 7 when dependent on Claim 5 wherein said member (51) is a shutter comprising at least one arm of light opaque material extending radially from the part of the member lying on the optical axis of said reflective element (9).

9. A sensor according to Claim 9 wherein said

shutter (51) has four radial arms so as to be in the form of a Maltese Cross.

Patentansprüche

1. Optisches Verfahren zum Messen einer Drehbewegung eines Objekts, bei dem Licht in jedem von wenigstens zwei diskreten Wellenlängenbereichen auf einen Detektor längs eines Strahlenganges gerichtet wird, der ein Bauteil (9) mit Lichtdurchlaß- oder Lichtreflexionseigenschaften aufweist, die sich räumlich für Licht in jedem der Wellenlängenbereiche in wenigstens einer quer zu dem Strahlengang verlaufenden Richtung unterschiedlich ändern; das Ausgangssignal des Detektors zur Bildung einer Anzeige der in jedem der Wellenlängenbereiche längs des Strahlenganges übertragenen Lichtmenge verwendet wird und die aus einer Bewegung des Objekts (3) resultierende Änderung des Verhältnisses der Anzeigen bestimmt wird, wobei der Strahlengang ferner ein zweites Bauteil (51) mit Lichtdurchlaß- oder Lichtreflexionseigenschaften aufweist, die sich räumlich in gleicher Weise für Licht in jedem der Wellenlängenbereiche in wenigstens einer Richtung quer zu dem Strahlengang ändern, und wobei die beiden Bauteile (9) und (51) so angeordnet sind, daß eine Bewegung des Objekts (3) eine Relativbewegung der beiden Bauteile in einer Richtung quer zu dem Strahlengang bewirkt.

2. Fühler zur Anwendung bei einem optischen Verfahren zum Messen einer Drehbewegung eines Objekts nach Anspruch 1, mit: einer Lichtführung (5); einem konkaven lichtreflektierenden Element (9), das so angeordnet ist, daß ein Ende (7) der Lichtführung (5) aus einer Lage, in der es sich weitgehend im Krümmungsmittelpunkt des reflektierenden Elements (9) befindet, zu dem reflektierenden Element (9) hin gerichtet ist; einem lichtdurchlässigen Bauteil (51), das zwischen dem einen Ende der Lichtführung und dem reflektierenden Element angeordnet ist, wobei das eine von dem Bauteil und dem reflektierenden Element, wie erforderlich, Durchlaß- oder Reflexionseigenschaften aufweist, die sich für Licht in jedem von wenigstens zwei verschiedenen Wellenlängenbereichen räumlich in wenigstens einer Richtung quer zur optischen Achse des reflektierenden Elements (9) unterschiedlich für Licht in jedem der Wellenlängenbereiche ändern, und das andere von dem Bauteil und dem reflektierenden Element, wie erforderlich, Lichtdurchlaß- oder Reflexionseigenschaften aufweist, die sich räumlich in der einen Richtung in der gleichen Weise für Licht in jedem der Wellenlängenbereiche ändern, und wobei das Bauteil (51) und das reflektierende Element (9) so gelagert sind, daß sie relativ zueinander in der einen Richtung bei einer Bewegung des Objekts (3) bewegbar sind.

3. Fühler nach Anspruch 2, bei dem das reflektierende Element (9) relativ zu dem einen Ende der Lichtführung feststehend gelagert und zusammen mit dem Objekt bewegbar ist.

4. Fühler nach Anspruch 2 oder Anspruch 3, bei dem das Bauteil (51) und das reflektierende Element (9) so angeordnet sind, daß sie eine relative Drehbewegung zusammen mit der Bewegung des Objekts (3) ausführen.

5. Fühler nach Anspruch 4, bei dem das Bauteil (51) auf dem Ende einer Welle (3) drehbar gelagert ist, die sich von der der Lichtführung (5) abgekehrten Seite des reflektierenden Elements (9) aus durch eine mittlere Öffnung in dem reflektierenden Element (9) erstreckt.

6. Fühler nach Anspruch 4 oder 5, bei dem das eine von dem Bauteil (51) und dem reflektierenden Element (9) zwei Flächen (1, 2) aufweist, die jeweils nur in einem der beiden diskreten Wellenlängenbereiche Licht durchlassen oder reflektieren, und das andere von dem Bauteil (51) und dem reflektierenden Element (9) nur in einer Fläche Licht durchläßt oder reflektiert, die im wesentlichen die gleiche Form wie die eine der beiden Flächen (1, 2) des einen von dem Bauteil (51) und dem reflektierenden Element (9) hat.

7. Fühler nach einem der Ansprüche 2 bis 6, bei dem das eine von dem Bauteil (51) und dem reflektierenden Element (9) das reflektierende Element (9) ist und das Bauteil (51) aus einem Element besteht, das den Strahlengang zwischen dem einen Ende (7) der Lichtführung (5) und dem reflektierenden Element (9) teilweise sperrt.

8. Fühler nach den Ansprüchen 5 und 7, bei dem das Bauteil (51) ein Verschuß mit wenigstens einem Arm aus lichtundurchlässigem Material ist, der sich radial von demjenigen Teil des Bauteils aus erstreckt, der in der optischen Achse des reflektierenden Elements (9) liegt.

9. Fühler nach Anspruch 8, bei dem der Verschuß (51) vier radiale Arme aufweist, so daß er die Form eines Malteser-Kreuzes hat.

Revendications

1. Procédé optique de mesure d'un déplacement en rotation d'un objet, comprenant la projection de lumière dans chacune d'au moins deux bandes séparées de longueurs d'onde, sur un détecteur, suivant un trajet comprenant un organe (9) ayant des propriétés de transmission ou de réflexion de la lumière qui varient dans l'espace d'une manière différente pour des lumières comprises dans les deux bandes de longueurs d'onde, au moins dans une direction transversale audit trajet, l'utilisation du signal de sortie du détecteur pour l'obtention d'une indication relative à la quantité de lumière transmise dans chacune des bandes de longueurs d'onde, le long dudit trajet de la lumière, et la détermination du changement du rapport des indications résultant du déplacement de l'objet (3), ledit trajet comprenant en outre un second organe (51) ayant des propriétés de transmission et de réflexion de la lumière qui varient dans l'espace de la même manière pour des lumières des deux bandes de longueurs d'onde, dans au moins une direction transversale audit trajet, les deux organes (9 et 51) étant disposés de manière que le déplacement

de l'objet (3) provoque un déplacement des deux organes l'un par rapport à l'autre en direction transversale audit trajet.

2. Capteur destiné à être utilisé dans un procédé optique de mesure du déplacement en rotation d'un objet selon la revendication 1, comprenant un guide de lumière (5), un élément concave (9) réfléchissant la lumière, placé de manière qu'une première extrémité (7) du guide (5) de lumière soit dirigée vers l'élément réfléchissant (9) depuis une position qui se trouve pratiquement au centre de courbure de l'élément réfléchissant (9), un organe (51) capable de transmettre de la lumière, placé entre la première extrémité du guide de lumière et l'élément réfléchissant, l'organe ou l'élément réfléchissant ayant des propriétés de transmission ou de réflexion, selon le cas, qui, pour les lumières dans chacune d'au moins deux bandes différentes de longueurs d'onde, varient dans l'espace dans au moins une direction transversale à l'axe optique de l'élément réfléchissant (9) de manière différente pour les lumières des deux bandes de longueurs d'onde, et l'élément réfléchissant ou ledit organe respectivement ayant des propriétés de transmission ou de réflexion de la lumière, selon le cas, qui varient dans l'espace dans ladite direction de la même manière pour les lumières des deux bandes de longueurs d'onde, ledit organe (51) et l'élément réfléchissant (9) étant supportés afin qu'ils puissent être déplacés l'un par rapport à l'autre dans ladite direction avec le déplacement de l'objet (3).

3. Capteur selon la revendication 2, dans lequel l'élément réfléchissant (9) est supporté en position fixe par rapport à la première extrémité du guide de lumière, et ledit organe est destiné à se déplacer avec l'objet.

4. Capteur selon la revendication 2 ou 3, dans lequel ledit organe (51) et l'élément réfléchissant (9) sont disposés afin qu'ils présentent un déplacement relatif en rotation avec le déplacement de l'objet (3).

5. Capteur selon la revendication 4, dans lequel ledit organe (5) est monté afin qu'il tourne sur l'extrémité d'un arbre (3) passant par une ouverture centrale formée dans l'élément réfléchissant (9) à partir du côté de l'élément réfléchissant (9) qui est distant du guide de lumière (5).

6. Capteur selon la revendication 4 ou 5, dans lequel ledit organe (51) ou l'élément réfléchissant (9) comporte deux zones (1, 2) qui transmettent ou réfléchissent chacune de la lumière uniquement dans l'une des deux bandes séparées de longueurs d'onde, et l'élément réfléchissant (9) ou ledit organe (51) respectivement transmet ou réfléchit de la lumière uniquement dans une zone ayant une configuration qui est pratiquement la même que celle des deux zones (12) dudit organe (51) ou de l'élément réfléchissant (9) respectivement.

7. Capteur selon l'une quelconque des revendications 2 à 6, dans lequel ledit organe (51) ou l'élément réfléchissant (9) respectivement est l'élément réfléchissant (9), et ledit organe (51) est constitué par un élément qui cache partiellement

le trajet de la lumière entre la première extrémité (7) du guide de lumière (5) et l'élément réfléchissant (9).

8. Capteur selon la revendication 7, dépendant de la revendication 5, dans lequel ledit organe (51) est un obturateur comprenant au moins un bras d'un matériau opaque à la lumière, dépassant

sant radialement de la partie de l'organe qui se trouve sur l'axe optique de l'élément réfléchissant (9).

9. Capteur selon la revendication 9, dans lequel l'obturateur (51) a quatre bras radiaux disposés de manière qu'ils forment une croix de Malte.

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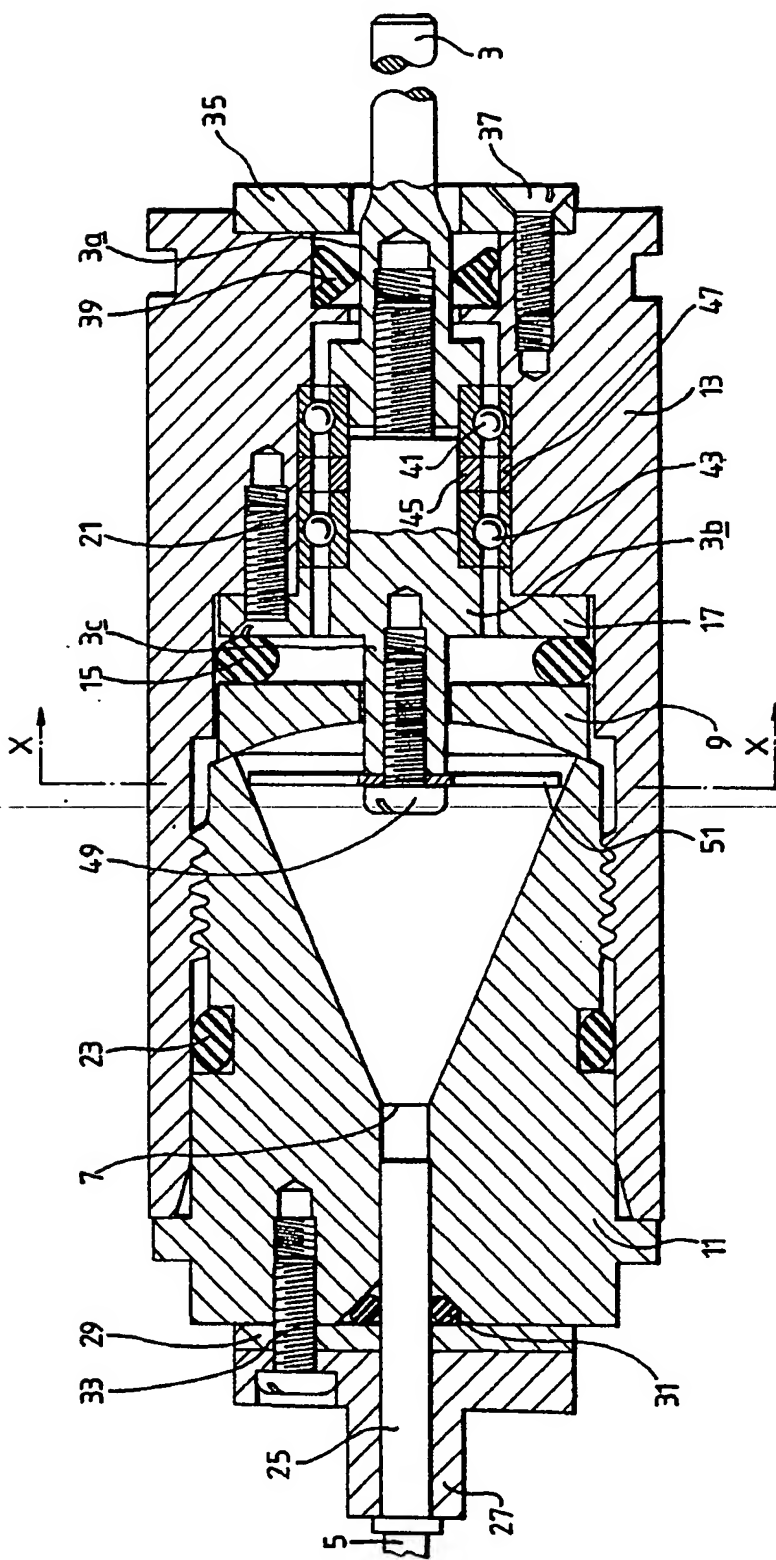
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Fig. 1.



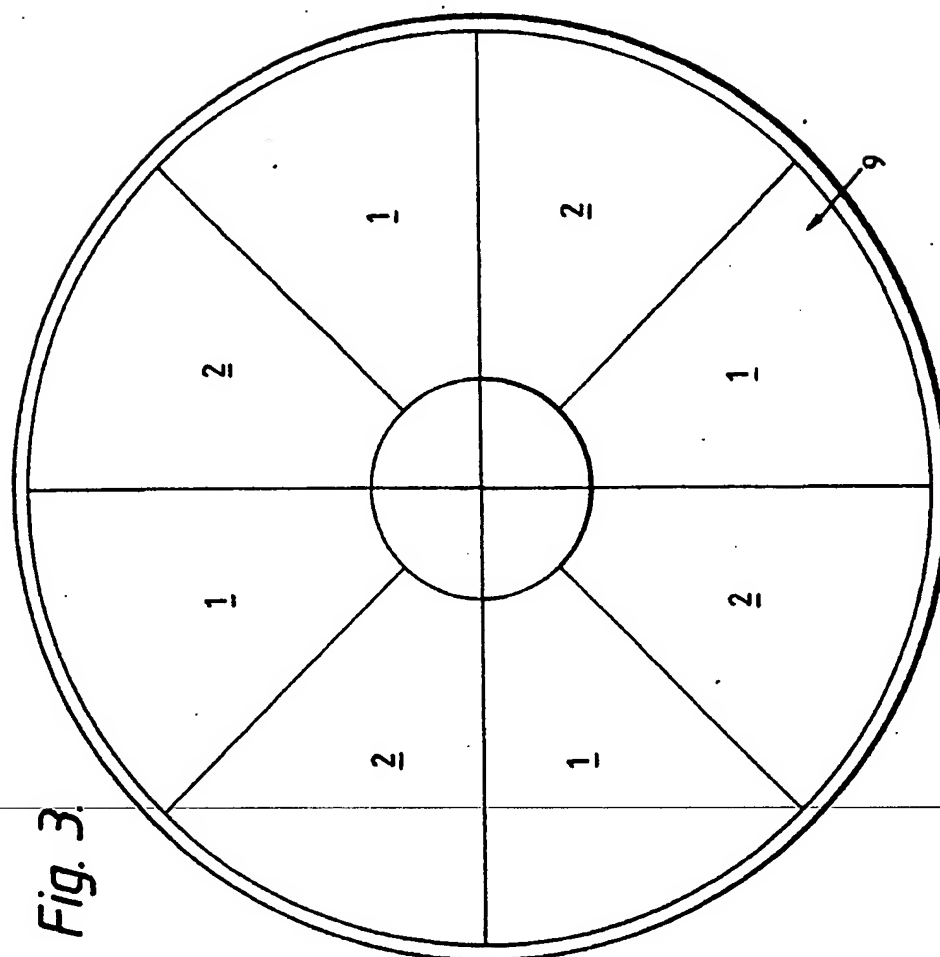


Fig. 3.

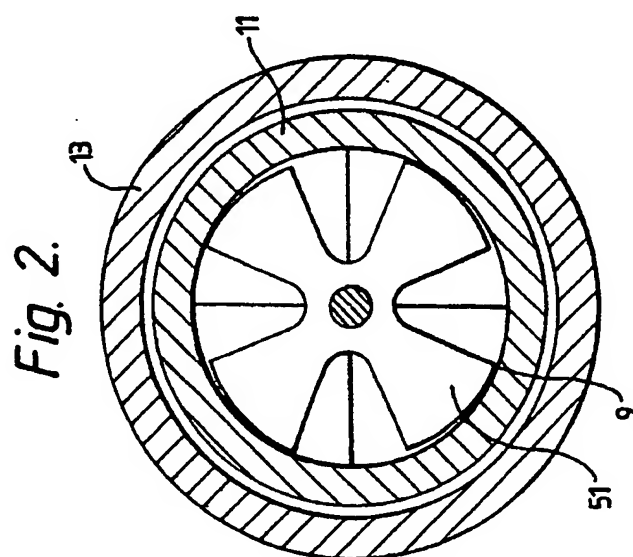


Fig. 2.